

RIBEIRA NEGRA

The painter Júlio Resende has been building since 1958, along with modern architectural projects, an important ceramic/mosaic activity, figurative compositions in tiles and ceramic plates, which culminated in his immense panel Ribeira Negra, in 1984. In this modern mosaic you can see the life and colours of Ribeira portrayed along 54mt. It may be that many people in the daily rush do not realize the beauty of this work of art overlooking the river, but it is worth going there and looking closely at the details of this panel, offered by the painter to the city of Porto.



PALÁCIO DA BOLSA

Built on the site of a burned down convent, the Palacio da Bolsa building rose from the city's ruins to provide Porto with a site for its stock exchange. Constructed over a span of 70 years, the Palacio is now a National Monument in Portugal. It is a really beautiful and impressive building.

Did you know that the desk of Gustave Eiffel is inside the Bolsa Palace? Well, now you know!

Several rooms in this palace display the art of marble and granite but the highlight of the Palace is the Arab Room, decorated in the exotic Moorish revival style, fashionable in the 19th century, and is used as reception hall for personalities and heads of state visiting Porto.



RUA DAS FLORES

It is considered the most beautiful street in the centre of Porto. It was opened in 1521 by King Dom Manuel I, was then called Rua de Santa Catarina das Flores and was the main road that connected the upper part of the city with the riverside area. Whoever enters this street notices the difference with the other streets. It has a nineteenth-century, bourgeois aspect, surrounded by typical two and three-storey buildings, with characteristic windows and iron balconies. On the ground floor are the shops and on the upper floors the merchants and their families live. It was the street of goldsmiths, of gold, of silver, where filigree and other pieces were made that made the Porto goldsmiths famous. Today there are few goldsmiths and other businesses replace those of yesteryear.



Curiosity: along the street discover the graffiti on the walls and on the electricity boxes with some traditional Portuguese sayings. My favourite one is this one:



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SERRA DO PILAR MONASTERY

Integrated in the area classified by UNESCO as World Heritage in December 1996, this Monastery is the architectural landmark of Vila Nova de Gaia. The interesting church and cloisters feature a unique circular design in Portugal. Inside, the Church features some impressive carved gold leaf altars with Solomonian columns. In front of the church, there is a wonderful viewpoint that contemplates all the splendor of the city of Porto and the Douro river below.



LUIZ BRIDGE

This Bridge is an icon of the city of Porto. It links Porto to Vila Nova de Gaia. Its construction took place between 1881 and 1886. The granite pillars of the original bridge are still in place, standing on Ribeira like a pair of gate posts. With a span of 172 metres (564 ft) and a height of 44.6 metres (146 ft) this was a great feat of engineering. One of the notable features of the Ponte Dom Luís I is its two levels; one on top of the arch and the other suspended below it.



RABELO BOAT

It is a traditional Portuguese wooden cargo boat that was used for centuries to transport people and goods along the Douro River. It is flat-bottomed, with a shallow draught, which was necessary to navigate the often shallow fast-flowing waters of the upper Douro prior to the construction of dams and locks from 1968 onwards. Native to the Douro Region, it does not exist in any other place in the world. Its history is closely linked to the production and trade of port wine. Before the arrival of the railway, the Rabelo was the fastest and the most efficient means of transport between the Douro Valley, where port wine is produced, and the city of Porto, where it was traded and exported worldwide.



Port wine is produced exclusively from grapes from the Douro Demarcated Region, 100 km from the city of Porto. The appearance of vintages in this region is about 3000 years old, but Port wine began to be internationally known and sought after around 1675. The Port wine cellars are located along the banks of the Douro River, in Vila Nova de Gaia. Even with all the technology already developed, the vintages in the Douro continues to be done manually. In 2001, the *Alto Douro Vinhateiro region*, where Port Wine is produced, was considered a UNESCO World Heritage Site.



Curiosity: These signs on the walls of the cellars mark the height the Douro water got to in flood times.

PORT WINE CELLARS

If Porto gave its name to the famous drink initially created for the English, the cellars of the port wine produced in the Douro valley are in Vila Nova de Gaia. Gaia enjoys ideal climate and an ideal place to age wine, that is why merchants decided to settle and have the cellars built there around 1710. As the English did not want to import French wine in their country they ordered their wines in Portugal. But the wine had to bear boat trips to Great Britain; therefore, sweetening elements (fruits, herbs, flowers, leaves ...) and brandy were added to it before it aged in the cellars of Gaia. The wineries of Port wine were built above ground in warehouses on the rock of the hills of Gaia. If you have the opportunity, don't miss out on visiting one of the cellars because you will testimony the making of Port wine from the vineyard to the glass, a wonderful present at the end of the tour.



